

Parallel structures

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Parallel structures refer to an English sentence that uses different forms at the same time. The examples below illustrate a number of parallel structures and their non-parallel partner.

Parallel	Non-Parallel
She likes listen ing to music, read ing and watch ing movies in her free time.	She likes listen ing to music, read ing and to watch movies in her free time.
She likes to listen to music, to read and to watch movies in her free time.	She likes to listen to music, to read, and watching movies in her free time.
She was asked to speak clear ly , slow ly and accurat ely .	She was asked to speak clear ly , slow ly , and without any mistakes .
The teacher said that he was a weak student, because he wait ed until the last minute to finish his homework, work ed slowly, and lack ed motivation.	The teacher said that he was a weak student, because he wait ed until the last minute to finish his homework, work ed slowly and his motivation was low .

With the sentences below, decide if they are parallel (P) or non-parallel (NP).

Sentence	P	NP
1. The teacher told the students that they should, download the document, that they should print it out, and that they should hand it in before Friday at 6pm.		
2. A man was arrested yesterday for speeding, dangerous driving and no tax.		
3. The first cause is that there aren't enough teachers and the second cause it not enough money.		
4. My friends love to meet up on Friday nights, go to the mall, then find a nice cafe to relax in.		
5. The students from Thailand came to Taylor's to study English, to meet new people and to have a new cultural experience.		
6. The homework was not finished on time, it was written badly, and he didn't correct his punctuation.		
7. By the time I am 30, I will have gotten married, had three kids, and I will live in France.		
8. The trip was fantastic, we walked around the city, bought some great new clothes and the weather was good.		
9. The main argument to support the proposal for free education is that current tuition fees are expensive, and that student debt is on the increase.		
10. Supporters of public transportation claim that it is cheap, safe and you can get to your destination quickly.		

On the previous page you should have found 6 mistakes. Below, re-write the sentence with the necessary corrections.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

In the paragraph below, find the parallel and non-parallel structures and circle them.

Example 1

Study is an important part of anyone's life. Whether it is for school, work, could be for your free time, study can help us to be lifelong learners. There are a number of ways that a person can study nowadays. However, when I was young, my teacher was strict and always said that in order to learn you have to read, write down everything three times, and to practice. These days, I prefer to do it my own way. I like writing notes on my iPad, doing online research and talking to my friends about it.

Example 2

There are a number of opponents to students working part time, however, there are many supporters. These people claim that working part time can have a number of benefits such as making extra money, learning responsibility and you can have a new experience. When a student works part time, they can earn more money to pay for tuition fees, rent and to use for free time activities.

Note* Non-parallel structures can be difficult to find in your writing, so it would be a good idea to ask a friend, classmate or teacher to proof read your essay before you hand it in.

